GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:652
ANSWERED ON:27.04.2016
Visa to Indian Professionals
Kamaraaj Dr. K.

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the US and European countries had made many changes in their policy towards granting visa to scientists/professionals;
(b) if so, the details thereof;
(c) whether the Government has asked the US and European countries to relax visa regime for Indian Scientists and IT professionals; and
(d) if so, the response received by the Government from the US and European authorities in this regard?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
[GEN. (DR) V. K. SINGH (RETD)]

(a) & (b) While most of the European countries have not made many changes/any major change in their policy towards granting visa to scientists/professionals, the UK and the US have announced a few changes in the recent past. In March 2016, the UK Government announced its decision to accept a majority of the recommendations of the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) on changes to Tier-2 visa route for those undertaking skilled work in the UK. The key changes to the Tier-2 visa route, proposed to be implemented, relate to increase in salary thresholds, introduction of Immigration Skill Charge (ISC) from April 2017 and Immigration Health Surcharge (IHS). With regard to the US, on December 18, 2015, the US Congress passed the Omnibus Spending Bill which included doubling of the L-1 and H-1B visa fees for 50: 50 companies. With the legislation in place, these companies would need to pay $4,500 extra for each L-1 visa and $4000 extra for each H-1B visa. The increase in visa fee would be for a period of 10 years and would also apply to visa extensions. These funds would be used by the US to fund treatment of 9/11 terrorist attack victims and biometric tracking system.

(c) & (d) The Government raises these issues on a regular basis at various bilateral fora. These issues are also taken up and discussed with the countries under the framework of General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATs). In line with this approach, the issue has been raised with the UK government. With regard to the US, the Government of India has raised its concerns strongly with the US interlocutors at various levels over the last few months. We have conveyed to the US Government that this provision is discriminatory as it basically targets Indian IT companies. Prime Minister had raised this issue with the US President Barack Obama during their talks over telephone on December 16, 2015. We continue to reiterate our serious concerns to the US.